

# Corrections Advisory Council Study Subcommittee



TO: Members, interested parties  
FROM: Bob Anez

RE: Jan. 5 meeting summary

The subcommittee met at 10 a.m. in the conference room of the Department of Corrections annex to discuss and vote on a study topic for this year.

After lengthy discussion about the chronic and persistent overcrowding issue in both the men's and women's prisons, and the projected increase in growth for both prisons, the subcommittee decided to tackle the issue head on.

The consensus of the subcommittee was that a study should focus on what kind of individualized programs and services are needed in community corrections to keep nondangerous, nonviolent offenders out of prison, with the intent to significantly reduce prison populations. The study also would address the issues affecting drug-addicted and mentally ill offenders, who make up as much as 80 percent of the offender population.

Building community programs that treat these afflictions, which often work in tandem, while keeping offenders in their communities is one goal. Another is to make re-entry into the community an easier, smoother and more successful process by providing the necessary resources and services needed as offenders transition back to their lives **after** DOC commitment.

The study would consider prevention and treatment programs tuned to the unique needs of sex offenders, methamphetamine and other drug users, and the mentally ill. Because the huge rise in the number of incarcerated women is

largely attributed to crimes related to meth, and the disproportionately high incarceration rate of American Indians is partially due to cultural differences in navigating the court and penal systems, attention will be focused on the special needs of these populations. Possible solutions include more drug treatment counselors, job assistance advisers in probation and parole offices, additional probation and parole officers, greater use of drug-treatment courts, **creation of mental-illness courts**, and healing circles.

Other issues which may be addressed by the study include: considering legislation permitting unconditional discharge as a means of reducing the rapidly rising burden that long probation or parole sentences puts on the community corrections system; the lack of availability of therapists for sex offenders in some areas, coupled with the unwillingness of some prerelease center screening committees to accept sex offenders in their communities; and assessing probationer status for possible reduction in numbers.